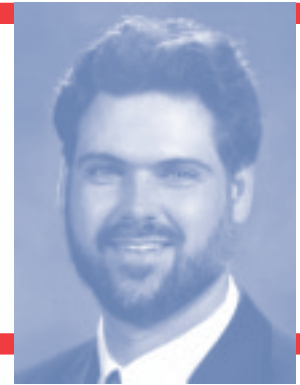




A Report to the 18th District



2003 Legislative Session

Rep. Tom Mielke

Rep. Ed Orcutt

Dear friends,

We went to the state Capitol in January for the 2003 legislative session, ready to work cooperatively toward the things people across the 18th District have told us they want. Jobs, as in preserving what we have and attracting new employers. A state government that will live within its means, the same way families must when money is tight. And responsible solutions to the other important issues facing our communities, like transportation, education and health care.

We have another goal, and that is to begin rebuilding the public's trust in state government. It would be hard to think of a time when people have had less confidence in government's ability to solve the problems affecting them. By giving our citizens more economic opportunities, showing that government can invest their tax dollars wisely, and making the difficult decisions, we can start to repair the relationship between people and their government.

You can help us by reading this report on the issues affecting our area and state, and sharing your answers to the questions we've asked. Call us using the toll-free legislative hotline, send e-mails, write letters, or stop in for a visit if you are in the Olympia area. And remember, anytime you need help dealing with a government agency, your 18th District lawmakers are ready to lend a hand.

Sincerely,

Tom Mielke

Ed Orcutt

Rep. Tom Mielke

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Committees:

Criminal Justice & Corrections (Ranking Republican)
Local Government
Transportation

Rep. Ed Orcutt

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Committees:

Agriculture & Natural Resources
Capital Budget
Finance

Toll free Legislative Hotline: 1- 800- 562- 6000
Legislative Information on the Internet: www.leg.wa.gov
State Government on the Internet: www.access.wa.gov

Representatives Tom Mielke & Ed Orcutt

About this letter...

Following last year's boundary adjustment, the 18th Legislative District is now home to about 120,000 people in Clark and Cowlitz counties – including residents of Camas and Washougal (welcome!). Letters like this are an efficient way for us to reach you and your family with information about issues that may affect your daily life in some way. Producing this letter together also saves money – and every little bit helps in times like these. But we really would prefer to correspond more directly with you. Send your e-mail address so we can regularly inform you about things happening at the Capitol. E-mail your questions, leave a message using the toll-free hotline, or put a letter in the mail. We're always happy to hear from you.

Rebuild trust through responsible budgeting

State government budgets are written to cover two years' worth of income and spending. In spite of the lousy economy, our state expects to collect much more revenue in the next two years than it did during 2001-03. Even so, there won't be nearly enough money to maintain state-provided services in 2003-05 as they are now. That tells us the "shortfall" estimated at more than \$2 billion is caused by a spending problem, not a revenue problem.

The solution? Not raising taxes – higher taxes would only cause employers and families to struggle even more. The responsible answer is to do what families must do when hard times hit – make government live within its means. That means reducing services to a level we can afford. We're pleased Governor Locke publicly favors that approach instead of calling for general tax increases. We hope members of his party in the Legislature will go along.



Rep. Tom Mielke has been appointed as the ranking Republican on the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee.

Bring jobs & prosperity back to Washington

We're concerned about the state budget, but it isn't the real crisis in Washington. What worries us most is unemployment, and the sad shape of our economy. Since 1999, Washington has lost 160,000 jobs – almost the population of Vancouver. And for two years, our state's unemployment rate has hovered near the worst in the country.

We and other House Republicans want to get Washington back to where it was in 1999 by creating 160,000 new private-sector jobs in the next three years. We can do that with regulatory changes, like those suggested by the Washington Competitiveness Council, to attract new employers and encourage expansion. We also believe government needs to change its attitude, and remember that its financial health depends directly on the private sector. The smart thing to do would be to act as a partner, not an adversary, with employers who grow our economy and provide jobs and income for our citizens.



A Report to the 18th District

Transportation: reforms before revenue

We must improve our state's transportation system. Families spend too long on the roads and not enough time together at the dinner table. Businesses spend far too much money moving products.

Now there's a plan that will change the rules, bring real accountability to the Department of Transportation, and most importantly, get our state moving again. It will respond to the needs of families and employers but also will hold DOT accountable for your tax dollars.

We are calling on DOT to streamline the permit process, reduce red tape and get roads built. We can eliminate the excessive government regulation that is preventing a much-needed economic recovery. We are proposing more performance audits and common-sense prevailing wage reform. The state must eliminate the barriers to public/private partnerships and make a commitment to contract out more services to the private sector.

After a reform on our list is enacted in full – and only then – we would authorize a one-cent increase in the gas tax. Unlike Referendum 51, our plan puts reforms ahead of revenue.

We can change the way government does business in Washington. We are committed to working to address the needs of families in our state and challenge our Democrat colleagues to accept these transportation reforms and help bring jobs back to Washington.



Rep. Ed Orcutt visits with Sean Sevier, a Clark County 12th-grader who spent a February day at the Capitol learning about the lawmaking process.

Upholding our commitment to public safety

In the past few years, many of you have taken the opportunity to call our offices and share your concerns and priorities about state government.

Time and time again, public safety tops the list. Protecting its people should remain one of the primary responsibilities of government.

Keeping the WSP Crime Lab open

We are concerned the governor's Capital Budget does not include funding to expand and move the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab from Kelso to Vancouver. It appears the proposed Vancouver lab has become a casualty of budget cuts.

This facility would be an asset for Southwest Washington. We have suggested the state move the facility to a building the Department of Transportation acquired in Orchards. This compromise would require some cutbacks, but create a high-tech crime lab to serve the citizens of Southwest Washington.

Locking up the meth cooks

We are fortunate in the 18th District to be insulated from some big-city crime. We enjoy living in communities where neighbors still talk and everyone looks out for the children. However, even in the smallest communities, methamphetamine is becoming a big problem.

House Bill 1423 would make manufacturing meth a "strike" under the persistent offender statute, raise the maximum prison sentence to 20 years and increase the portion of fines earmarked for cleanup of meth "labs."

Let's get meth-makers behind bars and out of our neighborhoods and schoolyards.



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**Now available full-time in
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A Report to the 18th District

Prescription drugs: seniors deserve help now

We voted recently to use more than \$12 million in tobacco-tax money to create a prescription-drug assistance program for low-income senior citizens this year. But the proposal we supported was turned down by the House in favor of House Bill 1214, which would put off senior prescription-drug assistance for two years while the Department of Social and Health Services designs a plan.

People want medications that give “fast, effective relief.” Unfortunately, HB 1214 would not supply that to the low-income seniors who have waited so long for help from the Legislature. They’ll be disappointed when they realize how little they would truly benefit from this legislation.

HB 1214 represents an empty promise – another layer of bureaucracy to oversee a new government-run drug program that won’t begin for two years, and may not save our seniors any money at all. We could not in good conscience vote for it knowing an alternative that would help seniors right now is available.

Town Hall Meeting Notice

Saturday, March 22
Washougal • 10- 11:30am
Washougal Citizens Center
1681 'C' Street

Ridgefield • 2:30- 4pm
Ridgefield High School Library
2630 S. Hillhurst Rd.

18th District Day in Olympia
April 3 • 10am- 2pm

We invite you to Olympia to discuss issues, see how the legislative process works, view the Capitol Campus and enjoy the time with others from the 18th District. You bring a brown bag lunch and we'll provide the beverages.

Please RSVP to our offices: 360-786-7850 (Rep. Mielke), 360-786-7812 (Rep. Orcutt), or 360-786-7634 (Sen. Zarelli).

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Tom Mielke
Ed Orcutt
Representatives

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the 18th District**

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